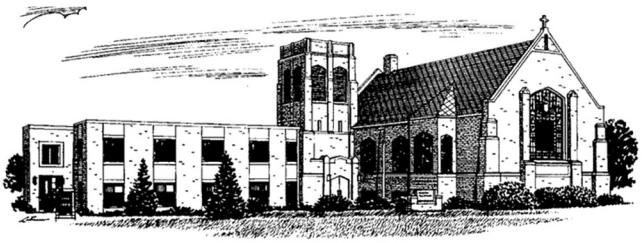
SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085



Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

Typical Sunday at Saron:

Fall, Winter and Spring (began Sept 10):
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer (begins May 26, 2024):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*

PASTOR JOAN'S ARTICLE FOR FEBRUARY 2024

The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on the 14th of February. We are given 40 days to contemplate our way to Jerusalem alongside Jesus and the journey from death and ruin to new life - a journey through the cross.

Saron is offering several opportunities to help in your reflection. I will highlight a couple of them, with more details for each elsewhere in this newsletter.

- A Sunday study on the Language for God will provide both the history and theology to inspire and motivate a broader sense of how language makes a difference in our faith lives. Prepare to be enriched and challenged.
- Wednesday evenings will offer occasion to hear the stories of vanishing creatures and the compassion that can result as Saron friends/members offer their own reflections to these stories. Prepare to be moved into action.

Each opportunity, as well as others, bring hope - the journey from death to life, from exclusion to inclusion. "Lent" means springtime, a time of growth and renewal. I invite you to join me in the journey.

- Pastor Joan

We extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone for their kind and generous well wishes this holiday season. Your partnership in the Gospel and your many ways of support and encouragement are greatly appreciated.
- Pastor Joan and Jim

February 14 | 12:15pm & 7pm
Worship with Holy Communion & Imposition of Ashes

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 9am-noon
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Tuesday Mornings and by Appointment

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;
John Olson is at the Willows in St. Joseph.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

2/2 Lindsay Gaspari
2/2 Kate Kohs
2/3 Fran Bolson
2/3 Makayla Bradley
2/5 Helen Peters-Totzke
2/5 Erin Vollmer
2/6 Mary Alice Brunner
2/6 Linda Dipert
2/8 Ernie Knauf
2/9 Frieda Williams
2/10 Aiden Ashley
2/10 Sterling Johnson
2/11 Kyle Carter
2/15 Robert King
2/15 Hazel Kohs
2/21 Edmund Staude
2/21 Ryan Talbert
2/22 Darlene Kiessel
2/22 Hailey Talbert
2/24 Doug Wold
2/26 Wendy King
2/27 Ted Hovick
2/28 Cheryl Houser

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

We don't have any wedding anniversaries on our list for February but we wish all our members and friends love and companionship for Valentine's Day, however that looks for you ❤

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

LENTEN CALENDAR

Lenten Bible Study: Language for God
See separate article for more information
Sundays, February 18, 25, March 3, 10, 17 & 24 at 12:30pm

Soup Supper & Holden Evening Prayer
Wild Hope: Stories for Lent from the Vanishing
Wednesdays, February 21, 28, March 6, 13 & 20 at 6:15pm (7pm Worship)

Holy Week
See March Newsletter for detailed schedule
Palm Sunday, March 24 – Easter Vigil, March 30

Easter Sunday
March 31 at 8:30am & 11am

As we get ever closer to wrapping up this incredible, multi-year endeavor, we are focusing on items remaining on our priority list such as additional indoor and outdoor improvements, which could include potential signage, lighting, and painting projects. Even when it seems like nothing is happening, trust we are conscious of the funds that are left and discussions are taking place regarding how best to use them.

As always, thank you for being with us on this journey and know that we will keep you informed until all projects are complete and all the money has been responsibly spent.

Worship

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we now have Sensory Bags available for use during worship or at other times when helpful. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made confidentially online via a link in our Thursday mailings. You may include as much detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are also invited to be part of the Monday group at 11am.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes. If you want to know more about this ministry, please contact Pastor Joan.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Wednesday Zoom Coffee Hour at 11am as long as there is interest. All are welcome!

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then **simply return the vase to Saron.**

FACEBOOK

We often share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page. We do not put names with the pictures. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Pastor.

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions.

We are always looking for additional helpers to share the load. Contact Marilyn Lucy (269/759-3464) with questions or interest.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

February 4: Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 40:21-31
Psalm 147:1-11, 20
1 Corinthians 9:16-23
Mark 1:29-39

February 11: Transfiguration of our Lord
2 Kings 2:1-12
Psalm 50:1-6
2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Mark 9:2-9

February 18: 1st Sunday in Lent
Genesis 9:8-17
Psalm 25:1-10
1 Peter 3:18-22
Mark 1:9-15

February 25: 2nd Sunday in Lent
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
Psalm 22:23-31
Romans 4:13-25
Mark 8:31-38

YOUTH GROUP

Our youth group (middle school and high school kids) are planning several events for the next few months, including a pool party & taco bar in either February or March. Watch your email for more information.

This group typically meets once per month after the late service for food, fun and fellowship. Friends are always welcome! **Contact Scott at scottgaspari@outlook.com with any questions or to be added to the email list.**

ELCA YOUTH GATHERING

It's starting to feel real now! The group heading to New Orleans has their lodging assignments and are busy with fundraising. See more information about the Super Chili Bowl on February 11 on the back of this newsletter.

In the coming months, we will continue to share more about this exciting once in a lifetime opportunity ahead of the teens and will offer ways for our congregation to support them through prayers and fundraising. The chaperones will also need lots of prayers! Stay tuned!

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

We have many educational options to fit your needs and schedule. Always feel welcome to join us, at any time and for as many sessions as works for you.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

Our program year is underway. We have opportunities for many ages and stages!

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

Bible Study

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

On **February 8,** before breaking for Lent, we will be doing a one-week study on Atonement Theory. What is that? Join us and find out!

We will pick up after Easter with a new study. You are always invited to join this group from **9:30am-11am on Thursday mornings** for one session or many. Contact Pastor Joan with any questions.

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

The Tuesday evening Bible study group will meet on **February 6, 2024**, when we will study the lessons and Gospel reading for the following Sunday. After that first week, we will break for Lent until resuming on **April 2, 2024**. Hope you can join us!

We meet **Tuesday evenings at 6pm** in the upstairs lounge for one hour then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. **All are welcome!**

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com)
Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com)

FORUM & fellowship

Join us on **February 7 at 7pm in the sanctuary** for our Area Pastor's Panel Discussion; the Future of the Church, A Local Perspective. This is the last in a series of 3 sessions dealing with the topic, the Future of the Church, but you need not have attended the previous sessions. This will be a standalone session. The panel will consist of: Rev. Jeffrey Hubers, First Congregational; Pastor Dani Veenstra, Zion UCC; Rev. Elise Low Edwardson, Stevensville UMC; Rev. Wayne Shearier, Institutional Chaplain Corewell; Rev. Joan Oleson, Saron ELCA. All are welcome!

This will be our last session prior to Lent, during which we will take a break for Wednesday evening Lenten services (and soup suppers!). We will begin again after Easter with a two-session topic, Dealing With the Politics of Outrage, April 3 and 17. **Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.** All are welcome!

BOOK CLUB

We're ready to go again on **February 4 at 6:30pm** in the lounge. ***Second Glance* by Jodi Picoult** has many aspects to discuss. An astonishing story of love, fate, a crime of passion, the Abenaki Indian Tribe of Vermont and Vermont's eugenics projects of the 1920's and 30's, plus so much more. On March 3, we go a little lighter with Lorna Landvik's *Chronicles of a Radical Hag* (with recipes). Amazon says, "A bittersweet, seriously funny novel of the life of a cu*rmudgeon,* a small town and a key to our troubled times traced through a newspaper columnist's 50 years of taking on the world."

We welcome everyone to join us whenever you can or whenever a selection catches your attention. If you want to be included on the email list to receive reminders of meetings and Zoom information, please contact Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

A great library has something in it to offend everyone.
- Little Pearl's Reflection

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Deborah Circle will meet on Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 7pm in the church lounge. Zoom will also be available. A link for that will be emailed closer to the meeting date. The study will be from the January/ February 2024 issue of Gather magazine titled Scripture and Nature: Teachers of faith, session one: Weather, p. 14-19. Denise Cook will lead the study.

If you have any questions,
contact Melanie at 269/449-8399.

INSTALLATION

On Sunday, January 14, 2024, the following Saron Church Women Officers and Leaders were installed:

President: Melanie McCammon
Vice President: Linda Pater
Secretary: Claudia Staude
Treasurer: Denise Cook
Mission Action Chair: Colleen Lundgren
Church Women United Representative: Irma Gorman
Deborah Circle Chair: Melanie McCammon

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

THE BENTON HARBOR
SOUP KITCHEN™
HEART-TO-HEART™

For I was hungry and you gave me food.
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
- Matthew 25:35

On December 28, Saron members Kristen Harper, Brooke Henderson, Kathie Bradley, Mary Zylema and Dave Bradley were busy at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen preparing lunches for 88 guests. We served a full ham dinner, including cookies prepared by Saron members. As a special after Christmas gift, guests were able to choose a warm winter hat knit by Jan Taylor. Thanks Jan, they were much appreciated!

If you are able to help with the preparation and serving, or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering
(or those not-so-noisy bills)
on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to
ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Help Someone With Your Old Eye Glasses! Do you have any old pairs of glasses? Lions Club International has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several Saron members who are Lions and we will be delivering our glasses to the club by mid-February. Consider donating your old glasses to the Lions rather than storing them or throwing them away. Thank you.

INTERFAITH ACTION

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions or need clarification on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org
Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 or lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com

Support

The Support Committee typically meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

Other Bits of News

BURIAL PLOTS AVAILABLE

Are you, or someone you love, in need of a burial plot? Saron has been gifted with two adult plots, which can be divided, at **North Shore Memory Garden in Coloma**, as well as a niche for two end-to-end caskets in the Mausoleum. We are offering these at a reduced current value with proceeds going to the Endowment Fund. If interested, or you have questions, contact **Liz Kunkel (269/429-1132) or Pastor.**

In 2025, Saron will celebrate our 150th anniversary! This will be a big deal and a huge undertaking, with events throughout that whole year. The committee has been formed to begin preliminary planning. Watch for details to emerge and if you are interested in helping, don't worry, there will be plenty of opportunities to join subcommittees this year.

During the 2023 Advent season, ELCA Good Gifts again offered Saron an opportunity to provide farm animals to needy families around the globe, animals that are so vital to survival. This year we focused on the importance of honeybees to successful farming, and to emphasize that focus, kids in the congregation were given a honeybee bank jar to collect their own donations.

Wow! We were all surprised when the kids brought back their banks on January 7th and placed their donations into a common basket. Pastor Joan could hardly carry it! Counting revealed a total of $333.22, which when matched by two of our members, meant the children had been responsible for **$670** in aid to the world's most needy people. A lesson in youthful stewardship for all of us to heed. Through the children's generosity, we purchased 5 goats, 5 piglets, 13 honeybee colonies, and 1 brood of chicks.

But that's not all! The rest of the congregation stepped up as well, donating another $2,240, making the total contribution **$2,910**. Because of your generosity, Saron is sending 19 goats, 24 piglets, 55 honeybee colonies, and 14 broods of chicks to thankful people around the world.

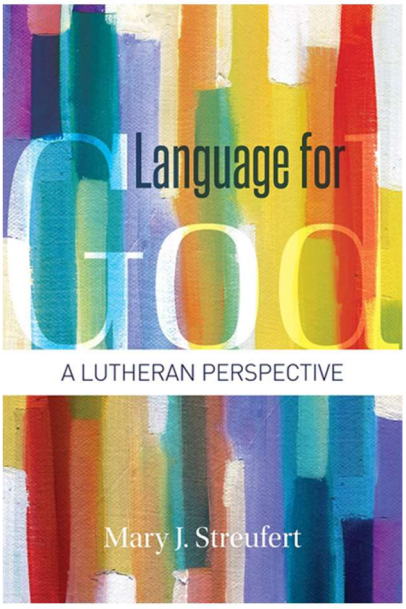
Thanks so much for your support this year. **We are making a difference!**

"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." 2 Corinthians 9:11

UNIQUE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY!

A six-week Bible study, entitled "Language for God: A Lutheran Perspective," will be held the Sundays of Lent after the second service. Led by Pastors Wayne Shearier and Joan Oleson, and based on the book of the same name by Dr. Mary Streufert, the study will be held **Sundays, February 18, 25, March 3, 10, 17 & 24** from **12:30pm-1:30pm in the dining room**. Pizza will be served.

Join in to be challenged, as well as grow in understanding of how our language and images for God influence who we are and how we live.



A description of the book is as follows: *Language for God draws readers into the necessity of language and images for God that are expansive and inclusive of all genders. People hunger for scriptural and theological explanations that adequately answer criticisms and support dialogue. Using Lutheran perspectives as a compass, Mary J. Streufert offers scriptural, theological, and historical insights that advance Christianity's ongoing reformation of androcentric images and language for God*. (Amazon)

You will want to read the book to get the most out of the sessions. You can order a copy from Amazon (or another bookstore) or through the church office. Cost is $19.50. **Order deadline through the church office is February 5 to receive your copy before the study begins.**

House Blessing & Sunday School
January 7, 2024

We can't express enough how much we love our music. Thank you, Irma, Marcus, and our dedicated choir members!

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

FEBRUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER

SUPER
Chili
BOWL
Join us on
Sunday, February 11, 2024
Open House: Noon - 2pm
Saron Lutheran Church
Dining Room
510 Main Street
St Joseph
Eat a bowl with us, take a quart home, or both!
Traditional Beef, White Chicken and Vegetarian variations will be available, along with bread and desserts!
Freewill offering will support our teen members attending the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans in July.
2024 ELCA Youth Gathering
CREATED TO BE
brave
authentic
free
disruptive
disciples

FEBRUARY 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**2**	**3**
4 **Noisy Offering** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option	**5** 11am Prayer Group	**6** 6pm Bible Study	**7** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Forum & Fellowship 7pm Deborah Circle	**8** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**9**	**10** **Council Retreat 9am-1pm**
11 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option	**12** 11am Prayer Group	**13** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**14** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee **ASH WEDNESDAY 12:15pm & 7pm**	**15** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**16**	**17**
18 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option 12:30pm Lenten Study	**19** 11am Prayer Group	**20**	**21** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lenten Worship	**22** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **SARON'S SOUP KITCHEN DAY**	**23**	**24**
25 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option 12:30pm Lenten Study	**26** 11am Prayer Group	**27**	**28** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lenten Worship	**29**		